

Memoirs of Sith Lord
as dictated to Steven R. Brandt

Chapter 1

When I died, I thought I would be with Padmé and eternity would be peaceful. But Sith were right. Peace is a lie. I was wrong to doubt them.

I hunted for Padmé in the spectral realms for a long time. My search occupied enough of my attention to prevent me from countering the numerous false biographies set forth by my son, Luke. His errors concerning my life were forgivable and understandable, but not those concerning Padmé. Not

anymore. Her true story may be all that's left of her.

Now, as I dwell within the Jedi's spiritual prison, with my final condemnation and destruction at hand, I looked to the memories of the woman I loved. For her I project these thoughts within the Force, recording them for those who seek their feelings in honesty, pouring the energy of my being within each syllable like spiritual blood.

Peace is a lie, there is only passion. And mine was Padmé.

Who was she? Many compare her to the Rominaria flowers of Naboo, both because of their delicate beauty and their tough, woody stems. Beauty and strength. In Luke's biographies she is portrayed as a warrior, as politically savvy, intelligent, beautiful.

But this touches only her surface. If you want to compare a Rominaria flower to Padmé, you must dry the flower and ignite it. Only then will you see the deadly orange petals of flame which burn for justice and vengeance.

Padmé knew me for what I was--not the foolish, arrogant boy Luke portrays--and when I turned to the Dark Side we fought together as one. In some quarters of the galaxy, particularly Neimoidia, the home of the Trade Federation, her name is feared even more than mine.

Because our souls were united, both in the Force and in love, I am able to see all the moments of Padmé's life as if watching from some hidden vantage.

It was her tenth birthday when the Trade Federation made their first big contract to mine the plasmic energy of Naboo. Viceroy Nute Gunray made a lavish celebration of the new contract, with a party, food, and presents. He brought grandfather Hask with him, an aging Neimoidian who was, if possible, even more bug-eyed than a typical member of his race. Hask brought a special present for Padmé that day.

Hask leaned forward from his hover chair, placed his bulb-eyes so close to Padmé that she could smell his vile breath. "Royal children area a treasure more precious as gems and gold," Hask said. He smiled with the exaggerated broadness only possible to a Neimoidian moth. "Rare and

valuable." He extended his long gnarled fingers to place the doll in Padmé's hands. "Like this Princess Theed doll, carved from living stone mined on Degoba."

The doll was pretty, after a fashion, and Padmé fussed over it greatly. Not because she liked it. Even then she had a crafty heart, and hoped to gain the trust of the Neimoidians. Later, she would hand the doll to one of her doubles with instructions to distract the adults while Padmé spied on the trade negotiations from hidden alcoves within the palace walls.

Padmé had body doubles because her father, always a cautious man, established them out of a concern for her safety. What the old fool didn't realize was that Padmé herself was more wily than any assassin, and he'd provided her with a perfect way to spy on him, escape the castle grounds, or otherwise circumvent his watchful eye.

On her tenth birthday, as she watched the signing of contracts, she sensed but did not fully appreciate how much of Naboo's wealth her father had inadvertently given away. But she would learn soon enough.

Padmé sneaked from the palace frequently. She played a pauper in the streets, dressing in rags and participating in the local festivals. She swam with the Gungans and once rode a dreaded opee sea killer in one of their competitions. She saw what the Trade Federation was doing to her planet, the way it raped the forests and swamps in its quest for plasmic magma, and saw first hand what it did to the people who mined it.

On several occasions she herself was herded into the Trade Federation mines with other Naboo children, both human and Gungan, until her fingers bled. The Federation used children to find the underground paths along which their prized plasmic streams flowed, as well as to carry away the living energy. For some reason not fully understood, the plasma was attracted to life, and young life in particular. The power of the Force was suspected in its operation, but the Jedi Masters sent to investigate the phenomenon were never able to detect or comprehend it.

But it was not the bleeding of her own fingers which turned Padmé's heart to flame, it was the

deaths of her friends, the scent of their burning flesh. Plasmic energy is dangerous to mine, and the timbre of her people's screams echoed in the long plasmic channels as well as Padmé's heart.

At twelve years of age Padmé masterminded a plot to sabotage one of the mine equipment factories. She stole the security codes from the Viceroy's own computer while he negotiated with her father and passed them to the Gungans. The Gungans then rewired the main energy nodes, causing the factory to explode. As sky lit with trails of fire, and crackling streams of sparks and energy, the people of Naboo danced in the streets and gave each other gifts. Padmé herself joined their frolicking, her smile wide and innocent despite her complicity in an act which resulted in the death of three Trade Federation taskmasters.

Though I've only seen this memory through the Force, it is a memory I cherish deeply.

#

I find myself free of my prison. I stand in the center of the central throne room on Naboo. No one is here at the moment. I'm not sure why I'm here, but there are few places I would rather visit.

I have many cherished memories of Padmé's youth which center on this location, but her fourteenth birthday stands out. It was then that the steel of her heart was shaped to its deadly purpose, and it was then that she was transformed from a girl to the woman I would someday love.

The servants were laying out cakes and sweet treats for her party, and the royal palace of Naboo was decked out with colored banners. Carts wheeled through the streets distributing cakes to the people, and Padmé herself rode in a royal procession through the streets. Or at least, that's what her father thought.

The real Padmé remained within the palace, hiding within the maze of secret passages which filled the ancient structure, hoping to learn more Trade Federation secrets. She watched through a crack in the stone as the Viceroy attempted to make her father sign a new agreement. The document, had it been signed, would have handed over much of Naboo to the Trade Federation's direct control. She listened as Senator Palpatine counseled her father not to sign.

The Viceroy tried every tactic imaginable--beguiling with flattery, threatening with blockade, and open warfare. For once, however, her father, a man she had always regarded as weak-willed and inadequate for the throne, stood his ground.

Her heart swelled with pride as she looked on from her hidden alcove. Then the Viceroy said. "You have a daughter, don't you?"

"What?" her father said. "Will you stoop to threatening my family? The Jedi Council will hear of it if you do."

"No. I was thinking that she is now legally old enough to rule this world. It should be far easier for me to sway a girl than an old man. After all, I am your daughter's trusted friend." He grinned with wide rubbery lips.

Padmé smiled as well. She was certain he believed that. The Viceroy had showered her with gifts, and she had pretended to be grateful. Whenever she saw him, she brought out the Princess Theed doll that grandfather Hask had bestowed on her at her tenth birthday and gushed over it. As a result of her girlish behavior the Viceroy was less careful in her presence. She garnered information vital to the sabotage efforts against the factories, and never did the Viceroy imagine that a little girl had betrayed him.

Padmé watched as the Viceroy pursed his lips and made a high-pitched clucking noise. Suddenly a man, dressed as one of Naboo's own rebel forces, burst through the window weapon in hand.

Padmé's smile fell. She watched from alcove, unable to do anything as the assassin's blaster ripped through her father. A fraction of a second later, the palace guard brought the assassin down with stun rays.

How did Padmé react to watching her father's murder? To her credit, she didn't shed a tear. Instead, she studied the room in detail, memorized every face. When the ceremonial transfer of power took place later that day, her first action was to get names to go with those faces, the names of every

representative of the Trade Federation present. Next, she ordered a pint of blood taken from her father's body, had it mixed and turned into ink, and used it to write the list of names.

The list remains today in an alcove behind the throne, encased in glass. The letters are still red, and those sensitive to the Dark Side of the Force can feel her hatred lingering. I've often come here, reaching out with my feelings to savor that moment of Padmé's life. Here, more than anywhere else, I feel I can touch her.

Without warning, bands of energy extended upwards from the ground and take hold of my spirit. Only with great effort did I resist, but to no avail. Yoda's spirit appeared in the next instant, and he raised his hands releasing bright waves of luminous green energy. It wrapped around me and carried me back to my spiritual prison.

But I don't need to be in the presence of the list to remember Padmé. I am a part of her. However they imprison me, I can still touch Padmé's memory with the Force.

#

After a time I found myself free of the Jedi prison again. I was deep beneath the oceans of Naboo in one of the Gungan's watery cities. For a moment I was perplexed, not sure how I escaped my spiritual prison or why I came to this place.

Do the Jedi have difficulty maintaining the force construct that imprisons me, or did they send me to this place? Perhaps, if time and chance allow, I will find a way to escape. Maybe then I can find Luke.

I looked about. Everywhere I saw Gungans, slobbering, gnawing on live fish, shaking their heads and spitting, crawling all over each other to see something. It takes me a moment to realize that this is more than just the usual feeding frenzy. Strips of colo claw fish meat are being consumed, and beverages spiked with colo claw venom are raised toward some object of reverence. What is it?

Ah, Padmé's crown. Now I understand. It glitters from within a case of pure crystal. Like the bloody list of names, the crown shines with essential power of the force. The Gungans can't sense the

Force as I do; but they remember the coronation of the woman who liberated their world fondly.

Padmé was crowned in a grand ceremony, with much pomp and ceremony. According to Naboo custom, a new monarch was expected to make a speech upon ascending to the throne, something that would set the tone for her reign. Prior to her speech, Padmé called for the assassin who murdered her father. He was presented to her, chained to a golden cart. Everyone could see that he was well-treated, clean, and shaven.

Padmé began her speech by saying that she found inspiration in her father's legal code, and that she intended to follow his example in seeking a way to treat criminals in a way that made society better. She then read her father's laws, laws considered among the most enlightened in the galaxy. "All criminals," she read, "even murderers, are to undergo a rigorous psychological program combined with medical treatment. After its completion and their rehabilitation confirmed, they are to be released back into the general populace." She paused. Nute Gunray, who attended by holo projection, greatly applauded the reading of the noble laws. When the people did not join in, he wailed "How beautiful are these laws! How terrible that such a great and noble leader was taken from us!" He clapped again, but still the crowd remained silent.

Padmé gestured for the assassin to speak. He wept as he poured out his feelings, described his mistreatment as a child and other such nonsense. He covered his face with his hands, but the force hides nothing from me. He did it to conceal his grin. I believe the assassin hoped to escape to Coruscant and enjoy the sizable fee he doubtless received from the Trade Federation.

When the assassin uncovered his face, his eyes were red-rimmed and wet with fake tears. Padmé smiled graciously and then, with slow movements, shredded her father's code. A confused noise erupted from the crowd, cheers and hisses, wails and clapping of hands. When she had reduced the document to scraps, she drew a blaster and shot the assassin six times. The body jerked in its chains, and one arm flew over the crowd where it was snatched by a Gungan tongue.

"The spirit of my father's law was correct," she announced. "But he lacked true vision. Society,

is best served by striking fear into the hearts of evil people, and by recycling their useless flesh as food."

She then turned to Nute Gunray's holo projection and said, "There are many in the Trade Federation who played a role in my father's assassination. I would see them treated similarly to this man." She stared at Nute's holographic imagine until he squirmed.

"Surely," the Viceroy said, his body quivering, "You do not think I had anything to do with your father's murder? I who have been your family's friend and given you gifts?"

Padmé smiled and pulled out the Princess Theed doll which she'd hidden within her robes. She clutched the toy to her cheek. "You have bestowed many fine gifts on Naboo. Thank you for the lovely flowers you sent for my father."

The Viceroy's face brightened. "It is my pleasure, Princess," the Viceroy said with an elaborate bow.

"And now, I wish to return the favor," she said. At her words, her assassins emerged from their hiding places. Padmé had recruited many of the most talented killers from among the rebels, including her most deadly and trusted assassin: Jar-Jar Binks. The air sizzled with blaster fire until every Trade Federation representative present that was physically present was dead.

"Just as you have murdered my people, so I now have murder yours. Where would you have me send the flowers?"

Nute Gunray sputtered, made incoherent sounds, and vanished.

When the cheering of the jubilant crowd died down, Padmé asked for a sword. She chopped up the bodies, and tossed the pieces to the Gungans--except for the fingers. Those she tucked in her pockets. She stood before her people, bloody and beautiful, and declared her planet free.

The crowd erupted into applause once again.

After this incident, the Trade Federation instigated its famous blockade, and the Jedi decided to get involved. Idiots. Tools of a political state. To their credit, however, they discerned who was in the

wrong on Naboo.

"Meesa found him," a voice said from the shadows. I turned, startled. For a moment I thought it was Jar-Jar himself speaking, but it was a spiritual presence instead, a deceased Jedi Master of Gungan descent. I tried to flee, but the mysterious bands of energy which roped me before appear again.

Obi-Wan appeared next, then Yoda, and finally Ja Vert, the Neimoidian Master of the Force who taught the Jedi the trick of spiritual prisons. Soon I find myself bound in darkness, with nothing but my memories of Padmé once again.

I wonder if Luke ever seeks out these memories of his mother, or these words which I pour forth into the galactic consciousness in spiritual blood? Perhaps someday he will find them, search his feelings, and come to understand his mother as I do. Perhaps then, even if I perish, someone will remember the real Padmé.

#

Time passed. The Jedi prison remained strong for a long time. I was weakening. Bits of the energy which bound my spirit together slowly leaked away. Would the Jedi let me whither away or give me a more merciful termination? I imagined them summoning me to judgment. What would I say? There is no one I haven't betrayed. Not the Emperor, not the Jedi, not Padmé, and certainly not my son, Luke. The idea of looking into his eyes filled me with dread. He was, after all, the one who saw good in me. He thought he'd saved me, that my place within the afterlife was secure. Peace is a lie, my son. Don't let the Jedi teach you otherwise.

In time, the prison faded. I found myself in the new Jedi Temple before the Jedi Masters. *My judgment*, I thought. I couldn't decide whether I was relieved or disappointed by Luke's absence.

Around me, I saw all the races of the Empire--excuse me, New Republic. I'm sure the Trade Federation will prosper under the new, more "enlightened" system.

My spiritual hands were bound with the same inexplicable chains of energy as before, as if hands reached up from below to drag me down. I resisted, but the agony caused by the chains was

considerable. Not only did they bind, they tore at the substance of my being, disintegrating me. I supposed that is the Jedi's goal. Progress in the knowledge of the force made considerable strides since Master Qui-Gon's death. The Jedi have become truly powerful.

Along with the living, I saw the ghosts of the old masters--Yoda, and Obi-Wan among them. All of these luminaries stood with arms extended, concentrating with the effort of meditation and directing the Force.

"Anakin," Obi-Wan, said. His voice is just above a whisper, as if he is afraid to be heard.

"Lord Vader, if you please!" I'll have some dignity, even in my destruction.

"Lord Vader, then. I have felt such a terrible disturbance in the Force--and I am told there is a new Sith coven on Tatooine, and that its members name you as their master. How is that possible?"

I laughed at that. They were so ignorant. For a moment I considered not telling them, but taunting them with their failure was too rich a prize to resist. "The younglings, the ones you yourself were training as Jedi, now serve the Dark Side."

Obi-Wan looks puzzled. The senile old codger. "But you killed them, I saw the holograms--"

"Did you watch the whole recording?" I ask. It was rhetorical, I know he did not.

"No, but I saw you kill several of them."

"Five. I only murdered five children. I spared the rest."

The beginnings of comprehension dawned on his face. "But--" he sputters. "But--Why?"

These people. I don't know why Luke worked with them. "Luke told you he felt good in me. Do you think if I was wholly on the side of evil I could have killed hundreds of children?"

Ghostly Obi-Wan scratched his head. He still didn't get it. "Look," I told him. "In the end I resisted the Emperor, threw him into the generator. Did you think it was the first time I opposed his will?"

"Yes?" Obi-Wan says.

"No, but it was the only time the Emperor discovered my betrayal." I paused to let them think

about that, and worry what I might still do despite these chains and prisons.

My words were greeted by absolute silence. After a suitable wait, I continued. "Because of the power of the Dark Side I could not resist my master to his face. So I decided to kill five then knock the rest unconscious by using the Force to constrict their breathing. Then I arranged for Padmé to put them on a freighter out of Coruscant. She set a detonator when she left to cover our tracks."

"Padmé?" Obi-Wan said, his eyes were nearly as wide as a Gungans.

"Yes. She told me to make sure I stood near one of the cameras, so that everyone would believe I'd obeyed my master and killed the children. It worked, the Emperor himself never knew the truth."

"Padmé?" Obi-Wan said again, and rubbed his face with his hands. Honestly, the man's a senile idiot. I sometimes wonder how he accomplished anything.

"Yes, Padmé. Are you deaf? She arranged homes for all the younglings. However, we underestimated the Hutts. They found out what we were doing, learned that children gifted by the Force were available for adoption, and they posed as loving parents. Over a dozen of those we saved wound up serving in the gambling dens of Tatooine."

"And then you came back and taught them the ways of the Force?"

"Using the Dark Side I spoke to them, taught them, and aided them when they overthrew their masters and the Hutts. You were right, Obi-Wan. Death did make you more powerful, and it worked for me as well."

A spasm of pain wracked my body and I howled. I was thrown back to my prison, but as soon as I was free of the pain I laugh. I guess they didn't like my answers. May the Dark Side take them all.

#

My next summoning brought me to Degoba. I was a bit confused. Did the Jedi send me to Naboo the previous times, or was it a failing of their power? Did they choose this location or did the Force itself? I don't see the purpose or the pattern in what's happening.

Luke was there. He appeared to have been living in some kind of elaborate tree house. I would

have gone up to him, but the chains of energy reached up from the ground and bound me in place. Luke descended, and as he took a seat on the ground the other ghostly Jedi Masters surrounded us, focusing their thoughts and energies on me.

"Father," Luke says. "They've told me what you said. Is it really true? Most of the younglings from the Jedi Temple lived?"

"It is, my son."

"Then I wasn't wrong about you, after all." I can barely stand the look of renewed hope in his eyes.

"Do not put your faith in me, my son." This pain is worse than anything, but it is not the chains this time. Padmé and I, whatever flaws we may have had, created two fine children. I wonder where Leia is? Will they take me to see her as well before my final judgment?

"Think you can use the Dark Side to do good, do you Lord Vader?" Yoda asks.

"What?" I ask. I always have the worst time understanding Yoda. Honestly, I think there's something wrong with him.

"Don't you see, Master Yoda?" Luke says, the light beaming in his eyes. "My Father was supposed to bring balance to the force. We've made a terrible mistake wiping out the Sith. My father saved the younglings twice: the first from the Emperor and the second when he formed the coven and taught them to overthrow the slave masters on Tatooine. He helped these children when we failed them."

"Freed the younglings are not. Enslaved to the Dark Side are they. Chained, like Lord Vader will they be," Yoda says. He nodded his head sagely. Obi-Wan saw his head bobbing and coped him. How did these people ever beat the Emperor? Oh, right. Luke.

"Maybe, I should go find the younglings," Luke says.

"You turned your Father once, Luke, and he reverted," Obi-Wan says. "What can you do against an entire coven?"

"I could join them. I am strong in the Force. With me leading them, we could make a difference throughout the galaxy!"

My son? The Dark Side? No.

"Don't do it Luke," I pleaded.

"Don't you see, Father? I can help the younglings."

The chains burned me with their terrible fire and for a moment I was unable to speak. My vision blurred. I needed to break free. I needed to convince Luke not to start on the Dark Path.

With a terrible effort of will I threw myself free from the chains. My spirit flew as fast as it could. On Degoba there is a place, deep in the swamp, that is powerful with the Dark Side. Instinctively I flew to it. If I could just regain my strength, get my thoughts together, I could put this foolish notion out of Luke's head.

I arrived at the place, a cave filled with mist. A shape approached me, cloaked in black. It is Luke. How did he get here so quickly, I wondered. So many miles away from where the Jedi held me with their chains.

"You don't know how much the Dark Side takes from you, my son. You must not become like me."

But instead of replying, he bent down into the mists and reached into an alcove of rock.

"What is it, Luke? What are you searching for?"

He rose with a helmet in his hands, the same black and fearsome work of metal I once used to strike terror into the hearts of the Jedi and sets it down over his own head. I heard my rasping breath coming from him. "No!" I screamed.

Then, suddenly, I was thrust back into my prison. I felt drained, weak.

Most fathers want their children to become like them. Luke, if you can hear these thoughts, listen to me. Stay away from the Dark Side.

I was alone within my prison. My thoughts, as always, centered on Padmé. If I thought about Luke and his foolish notion of joining the Dark Side, I'd go mad.

When Padmé and the Jedi first rescued me from slavery on Tatooine, I had only one thought in mind: to free my mother. Surely rescuing Padmé, a princess of Naboo from the Trade Federation would entail a reward rich enough to make that possible. Unfortunately for me, the Jedi Masters had more important things to do. So I came to Padmé, begged her for money.

"Naboo has little money in its coffers, Anni," she said. Her voice was sweet, but she was barely paying attention to me. Convincing her was my only hope.

I started to cry. Well, after all, I was only nine years old. Tears come easier to a child, even one who has grown up in slavery.

Padmé didn't even look at me as she studied political documents. Politics is a tricky business. Bills rarely do what you expect and you need a keen mind to avoid legal traps. I didn't hate her at that moment, but I didn't like her either.

"All I need is enough to buy my mother out of slavery," I whined. Padmé looked up from her reading and gave me her full attention.

"Slavery?" she asked.

I nodded.

"Who owns her?"

"Watto, on Tatooine."

"I'll see to her freedom, Anni. I'll send one of my best men." It was at that moment that I began to notice how beautiful she really was.

Naturally she sent Jar-Jar.

Many think of Jar-Jar as lovable and cuddly. He certainly wanted people to think of him that way. He did, after all, make a sizable profit from the marketing of children's toys in his image.

First, know that his true name was not Jar-Jar. Pronunciation of his name in the Gungan tongue involves shaking one's head and spitting in a most undignified manner. Jar-Jar got his name because he liked to collect the fingers of his kills into a jar, and whenever he came back to the domed city beneath the sea the Gungan children would surround him and scream, "Jar! Jar!"

Gungans, being bottom feeders, eat all manner of horrible and disgusting refuse and human and Neimoidian fingers became a delicacy to them--at least since Padmé introduced them to it.

Jar-Jar returned from his mission to Tatooine in less than a month. When he arrived, he fixed me with a smile.

"Is my mother free?" I asked.

"Before I's arrived. She-sa was purchased by a representative from the Trade Federation named Clegg Lars."

"No," I said.

"He-sa loves her," Jar-Jar said. "And she-sa loves him."

I swallowed. I'd hoped Jar-Jar would bring Shmi home to me.

"How-sa-ever," Jar-Jar said, "I took two-sa fingers from Watto before I left."

He held up the jar. Watto's gnarled blue digits floated in cloudy green liquid. "They-sa looks pretty tasties," he said. "But I think you-sa should keep them."

Jar-Jar gave the fingers to me, and I kept them with me until they were destroyed along with the first Death Star.

"I'm going to get them, Anni," Padmé said. "The Trade Federation. We're going to kill them all, not just for what they did to Naboo, but for what they did to you and to Shmi." It was then, at the tender age of nine, that I felt the first stirrings of love. There has never been another woman for me. Who could compare to the woman who would murder for me?

#

My prison normally opened like the lifting of a curtain, slowly fading like the night on Naboo.

This next time, however, the prison was ripped to shreds and I was tossed about in a violent storm of energy in the depths of space. After a time I found myself in the back of some small freighter.

I was disoriented and shaken, and felt something I've not experienced since my death: cold. It can only mean one thing. This is the space once occupied by the planet Alderan. I can see why the Jedi would send me here. I search for them, but neither they nor their chains of energy appear. So I sit quietly in a cargo hold and listen to the echoes of all the sons and daughters of Alderan, their voices crying out are always audible to a Sith Lord.

Suddenly I felt so very alone. "Yoda?" I called out. "Where is my tribunal?"

For several seconds, there was no answer. Then I sensed a presence.

"I thought I might find you here." It was Obi-Wan's voice. For once I was relieved to hear him. For just an instant, I remembered the days when we were friends, and my grief increased.

"So you want to hear about my part in this?" I said. I heard my own voice crack.

Obi-Wan looked about. "I didn't know you were involved in cargo transport."

"You idiot!" I screamed. "The planet that occupied this space was my daughter's home! So many of her friends lived here and I--and I stood quietly by when Tarken pulled the trigger."

"I know. I meant it as a joke. Sorry, old friend." Obi-Wan always did have a terrible sense of humor.

Friend. What a thing to call me. Now of all times.

"Lord Vader, if you please," I said, putting as much ice in my voice as possible.

"Oh, yes, whatever. Sorry, Lord Vader. I know quite well where we are. I heard--I hear the same thing you do."

"When I saw Alderan destroyed I decided to let you escape," I say.

"As I recall, Leia also thought we were permitted to escape."

I sighed. "After seeing the Death Star in operation, I knew the it had to be destroyed. But the Emperor had such power over me--such is the way of the Dark Side. For a long time after Padmé died I

lacked the will to resist. Alderan changed that."

"But you killed me."

"I didn't expect to. You just shut your light saber off and it was too good an opportunity not to take."

"So you expect me to believe you did not support the Death Star program? What did you think he was building it for?"

What made Obi-Wan recover from his feeble-mindedness at that moment, I couldn't guess.

"I wanted to use it to destroy Keldorath, the home world of the Trade Federation. The Emperor promised me it would be our first target."

If only that had been the truth.

I continued, "After that, the mere threat of using the Death Star was supposed to make the galaxy fall in line."

"A very tidy rationalization, Lord Vader," he said, emphasizing my name.

"For whatever it was worth, I saw to it that Luke escaped and I saw to it that he put the torpedo into the exhaust port. Did you know I could have shot him out of the sky at any time?"

I nearly did, too. Part of me thought perhaps it would be better if we all died together. I could have taken out Solo as well, but I spared the lot of them out of spite--spite for the Emperor.

"You couldn't, I used my power to interfere with yours."

"Hah," I laughed. "Believe what you will."

Yoda and the others materialized around us. "Back you go, Lord Vader." Yoda said, and everything faded.

"Wait!" I screamed. "Don't tell any of what I said to Luke. Don't justify me in his eyes."

I didn't know whether they heard me or not.

#

When I was next called forth I was on Tatooine. My old home. I'd be lying if I said I missed it--

except perhaps this one small patch of ground where I found myself. We were deep in the desert, in the hollow of a bowl of rock where there is shelter from the wind and sandstorms. Tattered remains of a settlement of sand people surround us. Luke was present. How good it was to see my son again.

"Is this where it happened, Father?" Luke said. He scanned the ground, searching his feelings, trying to see traces of what happened here, but the desert is too good at erasing even the residue left by the Force.

"It is the place where I slew the sand people," I say.

"Can you give me the real story? Why you did it?" There is hope in his voice. Then I realized why the Jedi brought me here. Luke thought I might have some explanation for what I'd done that will convince him I was a better person than he had been told. I laughed. This would be my chance to turn him from the Dark Side. *It will be all too easy*, I thought.

Suddenly, the chains of energy snapped over my wrists and held me fast to the ground. I gasped as they tore at my spiritual essence, but I fought them. Eventually, I was able to speak.

"The real story--" I clenched my teeth against the pain. "All right. Clegg Lars contacted me when Shmi died, told me what had happened. I hated Lars, because he worked for the Trade Federation, but I left him alone for Shmi's sake. With her dead he knew I'd have little reason to spare him, but came to me anyway because he knew I'd provide him with vengeance."

I am rendered speechless by torment for a few seconds, then I continue. "Tuscan raiders took her, tore her apart. I never saw her alive, never had that touching moment where she told me she was proud of me--much as I wish it were so. Clegg showed me what remained of her and said, 'Kill me if you want, but make sure they pay as well.'"

The chains twisted me, and I spoke up again. "I considered taking him at his word, but by risking his life to gain vengeance he earned my respect. Padmé and I set off at once to track the sand people down."

"Mother?" Luke asked. "She went with you?" Yoda and Obi-Wan's eyes go round.

"Yes. She was very good with a sensor, and finding hiding places in the rock. She'd become proficient at recognizing such places during the rebellion on Naboo. Together we brought down this settlement and two others. In each we left one able-bodied sand person alive and sent him away alive with a warning."

"Mother helped you?" Luke was incredulous, and his voice was pitched as high as it was when I first told him I was his father. "And three settlements? I thought it was one."

I smiled, even as the torturous chains tore at my arms. "It was then that she first told me she loved me."

Luke shook his head. "Didn't you have some good motive, like when you rescued the younglings from the Emperor?"

"I simply wanted vengeance, my son. And Padmé wanted a man who took justice and vengeance to heart; one who was bold in destruction and swift with a light saber--all the things her father had failed to be. She needed strength. Naboo needed strength, and when she saw my power and the murder in my heart, she knew I could save her people." I spoke with feeling. Indeed, the memory of that night was powerful--kissing her in the desert, the bodies of our enemies strewn everywhere, blood drying to red ash in the desert winds.

"No," Luke said again. He stared at me, pain evident on his face.

"I'm sorry, my son, but this is who we were. Murderous. Vengeful. This is why you must not turn to the Dark Side."

And with that they let me go. It was with a warm feeling that I re-entered my spiritual prison. *Luke is safe*, I thought.

#

It was a long time before I was summoned again. When it finally happened, I was brought to Skye, the planet of fire, the place where my skin was burned from me. When I arrive, the spiritual chains took hold at once and bound me to the site of my death. Fire cannot burn me longer, but

memories could. And this place abounded with them.

"The place, this is," said Yoda. "The place where you nearly killed Padmé."

Even after all I'd told them, they still believed the stories they'd cobbled together for themselves. I laughed, bitterly.

"Here your lies we will uncover," Yoda says. "Strangled Padmé you did, before Obi-Wan struck you down."

"Well," Obi-Wan says, "Luke may have taken a little liberty with historical facts. We fought on Skye twice."

Yoda gave him a withering look. "Mentioned this before meeting in tribunal, you might have done."

"The first time, Lord Vader choked her and left her badly injured. I retreated and took Padmé to safety."

"So," Yoda said to me. "Loved your Padmé, you would have us believe. How do you explain this?"

I pound my fists into the lava of Skye. "You don't understand the power of the Dark Side. I sensed the presence of life in Padmé's womb, and I feared the Emperor would discover the truth as well. What he might have done to my children--it was something I feared beyond anything. I resisted him, here as at other times. I unleashed a portion of my anger at Padmé to drive her away, to keep her and the children safe."

Yoda snorted. "Ridiculous this is. Hide her from you we did."

"Obi-Wan, you tell him," I said.

"Well," Obi-Wan looked away and scratched his neck. "Well. He has a point. Her children were strong in the force. Both of them. You couldn't expect Anakin--sorry, Lord Vader--not to pick up on something like that. I always wondered how we were able to keep that secret."

Yoda glared, menacingly. "Need to talk more often, we do, Obi-Wan."

"The second conflict," I said, "when Obi-Wan bested me. I'm still not sure how he did it. I had him on the run, but then he got me instead. No one here, I'm sure, believes that nonsense about 'high ground.'"

Everyone looked at Obi-Wan. Obi-Wan looked at his feet.

"Something to share, do you have Obi-Wan?" Yoda asked.

"I was in top form that day," Obi-Wan says lamely. "I loaded up on carbohydrates the day before. Stretched."

The council remained silent. Fiery pain stabbed along my arms. Finally, Obi-Wan said, "Oh, to the Dark Side with it. I planted explosive devices all through that cave and lured Lord Vader to stand over top of one." He paused. "The Trade Federation was dumping munitions at a really low price."

"So," said Yoda, scratching his head. "If an ally of Lord Vader Padmé was, why of a broken heart did she die?"

We all stare at him.

"No," Obi-Wan says. "She didn't die of a broken heart. She was burned to death."

Yoda blinked. "What did you say?"

"And her body was found here on Skye," Obi-Wan added.

They all looked at Obi-Wan. When he shrugged, they looked to me.

This was the greatest lie of them all, the greatest truth, the most important secret. "The Force has great power to extend life. I used it, holding myself together as I burned. The Emperor himself stretched his might across space to aid me, hoping against hope that I would find a way out. Death was close. But there was nothing I could do. I was immobile, fighting a losing battle against destruction."

"So what happened?" Yoda asked. He hopped nervously from foot to foot.

"Padmé. She'd stowed away on Obi-Wan's cruiser. She put on one of the worksuits used by the laborers on Skye and waded into the lava to save me."

"No," Obi-Wan said. His hands went to his mouth, and I swear, ghostly tears ran down his face.

"The suit was not rated for walking directly into the magma," I said in a hollow voice. "Just for working along the edges. She died saving me."

Yoda wiped his eyes on his sleeve. "Beautiful, this story of love and self-sacrifice is."

For once, I agreed with him.

"Talk more, will we when Lord Vader is safe," Yoda said, and gave Obi-Wan a squint-eyed glare.

And with that they sent me, rather unceremoniously I might add, back to my spiritual prison.

Wait. When Lord Vader is safe? What did that mean?

#

I heard a collective gasp of horror the next time I appeared.

I found myself in the Emperor's throne room, surrounded by the Jedi spirits.

"What?" I said. "Am I any more fearful than the last time you saw me?"

"You're coming apart," Obi-Wan said. "I see only a crescent of a face."

Though I cannot see myself, I feel the truth of his words. Parts of me are fading away.

"I am becoming as I was," I say. "After I was burned on Skye, I woke up here. My first thought was of Padmé."

Yoda nodded, sympathy on his face.

"The Emperor came to my aid then, as he promised. We tried to call Padmé back from the dead, and at first it worked. Her spirit blazed forth, charging and screaming." I still wonder what place of despair she came from that turned her into that feral creature of fire, energy, and darkness I saw that day.

I touch the memory, and it comes to life before us. The Jedi masters retreat in horror at the sight of what my Padmé has become. Her spiritual fingers dug into me like claws in an effort to hold on--but some mysterious force fought us, tore us apart.

It was the last moment I saw her, and however much pain it caused me I wish it could have

gone on forever. To my eyes, she was as beautiful then as ever.

"We clung to each other with all our might, I used every ounce of strength the Force bestowed on me--but In the end she was taken from me, and the parts of my being to which she held with her. I was reduced to what you see now."

Yoda's ghostly eyes water again.

"The Emperor became angry," I said. "'Love is too dangerous an emotion,' he said. Never again would he attempt to call Padmé forth. I tried on my own but--when I failed her--Well, that was my greatest betrayal."

Yoda blew his ghostly nose--a great honking sound. This, by the way, is another of those things that Luke has softened. The people of Yoda's race make a shocking variety of disgusting noises. Even in spiritual form.

"Broke the balance between life and death, you did," Yoda said at last. "Tore down the wall between Dark and Light. Such a thing was never meant to be."

"I would do it again," I said. "I would do it now if I could."

"Judge you for that, I do not," Yoda says.

But then he sent me away again, regardless. I was left in darkness.

#

The next place I found myself was in a moonlit garden high atop a Naboo mountain, a place I have rarely visited except in my darkest moments. It is Padmé's grave.

I grieved for the woman who was lost to me, who I feared was lost to me forever. Rarely did I let myself give in to this level of despair, but being here drew it from me, like blood from a wound. The chains of energy appeared, binding me.

The spirits of the Jedi shimmered into being around me. I hated them for existing when my Padmé does not. I hated myself most of all because I failed to protect her in life and failed find her in death.

"Tell us, Lord Vader, how we can find the Sith coven," Obi-Wan said.

"And let you strike them down?" I said. "Never."

"Promise, we will, to look into what the Trade Federation has done to our former younglings," Yoda said.

I laughed, bitterly, at the ridiculousness of it. Why would I betray the very army I helped to create?

"Joined them, Luke has," Yoda said.

I ceased to laugh. "No," I say. "That's not true." But at once I searched my feelings and knew it to be so.

"I'm afraid that, since you've begun to set the record straight he's become enamored of your cause--and your methods," Obi-Wan said. "Luke is now known as Darth Coronus, and he serves a dark spirit. We think it may be the Emperor."

With all the ferocity I could muster, I strained at the chains of energy binding me to the floor. I failed.

"Free me then, let me go and rescue my son. He must not serve the Dark Side. I've defeated the Emperor before, I can do it again."

"If we knew how to free you, old friend, we would," Obi-Wan said. His voice is soft, wistful.

"Bind you, we do not," Yoda says. "Your spiritual prison, the only means to protect you have we."

For several seconds I do not answer. They do not bind me? Then who or what--my spirit feels as cold as Hoth in spring.

And at last, I knew that it was I who had been the fool, never questioning my assumptions about them. The Jedi were not my enemies after all.

Qui-Gon appeared. "The Emperor knew how to use the Force to open the passage between the Dark and the Light. We fear it may be his spirit that controls Luke and his spirit that binds you."

"Call me Anakin," I said.

"Listen, Anakin," Obi-Wan says. "When next we call you forth it will be to confront Luke. You must tell us where he is."

"The Sith coven operates from the belly of a dead sarlacc on the southern edge of the Dune sea," I said.

Having betrayed my students, I was dismissed to my place of darkness. I stoked my hatred of the Emperor, and my love for Luke. Weapons I'd surely need when I faced the coven.

#

The belly of the dead sarlacc is vast, nearly a square kilometer of twisting tunnel. It is easy to defend because few will venture near it, and when they do the Sith children use the Force to cause its tentacles to writhe.

I said "children," but they were grown. Terrible warriors in their own right.

Luke stood among them, black cloaked and cold-eyed. I felt the power radiating from him--and something stronger, darker in the shadows behind. The Emperor?

The Jedi spirits lined up alongside me, facing my coven. Each of us prepared for battle.

"Luke, turn aside," I said. "Don't make the mistakes I made."

His mouth twitched. "Flee, Father." He raised his hands. "Or I will be forced to destroy you."

"No, Luke, listen to me. The Dark Side is not the way."

Luke shook his head, frowning. "Father, you know the power of the Dark Side. I must obey my master."

"I resisted," I protested.

"How?"

Violet energy crackled toward me from Luke's outstretched fingers, showering me with pain. Many Sith Lords have command that power, and Emperor Palpatine mastered it. I never learned to use it, but Luke showed a touch of maestro. For a moment, I was proud.

You cannot imagine how fearsome that lightning is. It is not the pain it inflicts, though that is considerable--it is not the material destruction it wreaks, which can take you apart at a cellular level--it is the glimmering of foresight it contains that inflicts the real damage. Through it you see the ends of your own acts, the accumulated consequences of your failings.

I see Luke, consumed by the Dark Side, becoming everything the Emperor was and more--I see his coven performing unspeakable atrocities. I see him turning Leia.

No. I denied those shattered futures. I had to save Luke. I threw Luke's power back at him, turned the violet discharges of energy away from me and redoubled my will.

"The Sith code is the key to beating the Sith. Peace is a lie, there is only passion."

I paused to gather my strength, pushing against the storm of energy.

"Through passion, I gain strength. Through strength, I gain power," Luke said. He struck again. Lightning flashes in his eyes, across his teeth. I know he does not hate me--not yet. But I felt the mixture of fear and hatred burning in him like dry wood. Consuming him as it burned me.

The other Sith engaged the spirits of the Jedi. Etheric lights gleamed and the crackle of energy filled the air.

"Through power, I gain victory," he said, shoving me backward.

"Through victory, my chains are broken. The Force shall set me free!"

I reached, extending my will. I strove to tear away the darkness from my son's soul. He twisted, a wounded animal within my grasp.

"Luke, the only true passion is love. The Sith call it a dangerous emotion, and the Jedi fear the attachment it creates--but I was never stronger than when Padmé was by my side."

Luke screamed, sending waves of power crashing around me. I saw Padmé's shining face outlined in that magenta fire, and watched it smash apart like scattered amethysts. It reminded me of seeing her blood boil away as her suit failed.

"My love for you allowed me to resist the Emperor," I said. "Through love, I defeated him in

the end."

I raised both my hands and called on all the power the Force has ever given me. Luke stumbled, blood appeared at the corners of his eyes and trickled from his ears. He gagged. I changed my grip, struck again, and Luke's flesh withered--just as Lord Palpatine's once did.

If I destroyed him, the Jedi could put our spirits together in one of their prisons. Death is not the end. Not for a Jedi. All I had to do to save my son was to murder him. You'd think it would be easy for one such as I. I've killed so many.

I released him.

He choked once and laughed. "Love?" he said. "Really?" He laughed again.

"Think, son. It is why you wanted to be like me in the first place."

Luke lashed out at me again, violet fire cascaded through me.

"If love is so powerful, why can't you defeat me now?"

I saw his face, twisted with pain and rage. I know the confusion the Dark Side can create.

"I don't want to defeat you--" but I could not complete the thought. Pain and fire constricted my chest, and in its myriad lashes of power I saw Luke's eventual destruction--and watch as the galaxy celebrated the day. Festivals, parades, and fireworks cloud the sky thicker than stars.

"Do you know that I've already lost three members of this coven?" Luke says. "I wanted to protect them, but that only made me vulnerable. You never warned me about what the Dark Side of the Force does with the emotion of grief."

I did not, but I did understand. I felt it then. Much of the Sith's power is self-destructive, but none more so than grief. "I warned you not to turn to the Dark Side."

I was powerless to resist. I could not free my son without destroying him. No matter what I did, Luke would perish. Not just his body, but his soul would be as fragmented as mine, gone to utter destruction--and it was my fault. From beginning to end, his death was on my hands. My failure was complete.

In despair I dropped to the ground.

"Fight, you must," Yoda urged me.

But it was too late for me. I yield when the dark bands of energy reached for me from the ground, sucked me down to a slow twisting agony that would make a sarlacc quiver with envy.

The Jedi tried to enfold me with their protective prison, but Luke pushed it back with a laugh. I felt myself blur, become smaller, then fade to nothing.

"There goes our last hope," Obi-Wan said.

#

I expected oblivion, an ending. Instead, I find myself in a palace. From the design I knew this to be Neimoidia, the Trade Federation home world. This puzzled me as I'd never been there before. My only knowledge of this world came from holos and stories. All the other places to which I was summoned held some emotional attachment for me. But this?

I saw Hask, sitting on his throne, chewing idly on something partway between worm and sausage. Hask, the old Neimoidian who ruled the Trade Federation for decades and oppressed half the galaxy. Hask, who gave Padmé her Theed doll. While I'd never met him, I knew him through Padmé's eyes, through Force-created visions. Here he sat, old, fat, and rich. I'd thought him dead, but there he was, enjoying the wealth created by his pillaging of Naboo. He didn't seem to know I was there.

I felt my hatred burn, rebuilding my spiritual substance. I realize that I hated Hask so deeply. Is this the final end of a spirit that follows the Dark Side? To be drawn inexorably to the object of his hatred? If so, there are worse endings.

I sensed power in him, a shining presence of midi-chlorians. He didn't seem aware of me, however. Perhaps it was because I was yet so weak and fragmented, my essence mere wisps of energy. But I was getting stronger. Soon, I planned to reach for him and--

But wait. It was not Hask which drew me, it was something else. I allowed myself to be dragged on, curious, as the flow of energies drag me inevitably down toward a small stone.

What was this mysterious object?

Padmé's Theed doll. I allowed myself to be pulled closer, and as I drew near I recognized another presence, bound within the doll. When I see who it was, I felt alive and whole again. I felt as if I were walking in the grassy fields beneath the sun of Naboo.

It was Padmé.

Her arms reached for me, tearing desperately at what remains of my spirit. She was the one trying to summon me all along. She was the origin of the mysterious bands of energy. Had I but known.

She sent her thoughts to me. "At last I have found you."

Joy can be a palpable thing within the spiritual realms of the force. As solid to beings in our state as fortifications or mountains.

"I reached for you--" her thoughts became indistinct. I felt her touching each of the memories which drew me, the places I believed were chosen by the Jedi for my judgment. I saw the Jedi Temple where I slew the five children, Degoba, the empty spaces where Alderan once floated, and Skye where I was defeated and watched my true love die.

"Why are you here?" I asked.

"The Theed doll he gave me was carved from the rock of Degoba, a planet alive with the force. Hask used it to bind me. I am part of Hask's treasure."

"I don't understand."

"Look around you."

I did. There were other objects like this one, items infused with the Force. Each of them was a force construct, designed to contain a spirit, and each of them contains a royal person. A wookie chieftain is bound to a simple bone, a Gungan boss to a shell, and the Emperor himself is wrapped in a luminous green gemstone.

I laughed at this last.

"Free us," she said.

Hask saw me, his great yellow eyes widened in shocked surprise. He snarled, and raised his hands and I felt a spiritual prison shimmer all around. I resisted, but barely.

"Leave my collection alone," Hask said. "Or Luke dies."

His collection? Then I remembered his words: royal children are like treasure. He has collected the souls of nobility as if they were coins.

"Luke is already lost to me," I said. Luke's death would devastate me, but with Padmé so near and my hatred so strong I have the strength to fight. "Only your destruction matters."

"I pledge myself to your teachings, to your understanding of the Sith," the Gungan boss said. I felt his strength flood into me.

"And I," said a Hutt. "Invest you with my spiritual wealth."

"Wraagh," the wookie chieftain said. The wookies make no more sense in death than in life. But between the three of them, however, I held the doors to my prison open.

"I also pledge myself and my people's blood," said a Tuskan lord. I saw in his eyes that he knew me, knew what I did to his kind. Yet in this hour enemies became brothers, even such as we.

"I have already pledged myself to you, but I renew it here with all my heart," Padmé said.

I felt the strength flow into me, and I extended my hand toward Hask. I felt the air choking off inside him. He gestured frantically, tendrils of yellow light spiralled around me, tried to draw the prison closed.

I was almost strong enough to choke him, almost strong enough to resist him, but not enough to do both. The prison nearly closed before I forced it open, but I had to release Hask for a moment and he sucked in a quick gasp.

"And I pledge myself to your--" the Emperor said. "To your--your perversion of the Sith teachings to--"

His power didn't come to me.

Hask and I struggled.

"I still think love is the most dangerous of passions," the Emperor said.

"My love for Luke is how I resisted you at the end, and it's the only reason I'm here now," I said. I gave up trying to choke Hask. He was too strong. "It is the only power that can save any of you."

"I bind myself to your--your understanding of the Sith code," the Emperor said in despair. Still, no strength came to me.

Finally, the Emperor groaned and said, "Love, it appears, is my only hope."

The Emperor was powerful in life, and his spirit in death was equally strong. With his contribution, I shatter the prison trying to close around me and turn my energies toward Hask. I confess, I enjoyed choking the life from that miserable reptile scum. It squeezed from him with delicious slowness, and he made a miserable croaking sound as he died.

As soon as his I saw the spark of life extinguished, Yoda and Obi-Wan found me. Their timing, as always, was impeccable.

"There," I said, pointing a spectral finger toward the glimmering remnant of Hask. "Take Hask to your spiritual prison."

It gratified me to see that they obeyed.

"Now," I said, taking Padmé's hand. "We need to rescue Luke."

"Freed from the grip of Hask, already he is," Yoda said.

"I want to make sure," I said.

We returned, Padmé and I, with our whole company--the Gungan boss, the wookie chieftain, the Tuskan, and the Emperor. All served me then, bound to me with the full power of the Dark Side. But as much as it gratified me to bend them to my will, I remember all too well what it was like to be in their place. I will release them as soon as I know Luke is safe.

#

The belly of the dead sarlacc was different from when I was pulled away, the dark presence in the Force which bound it was no longer palpable. Luke was sitting in a chair, and Leia was by his side

holding a cup of water. Han stood beside her, looking concerned.

"You should get that hyperdrive fixed, Han. I mean, it was charming when we first met, the way it kept failing, but this time you nearly prevented me from getting to my brother in time."

"Yes, your worship," he said, rolling his eyes. Luke's histories did get some things right.

"Leia," I called out to her.

"Father," she said. Then swallowed. Her eyes became round and glittery. "Mother."

Luke glanced up as well, a grin spread across his scarred face.

Han looked around, obviously confused and annoyed. "What?" he says. Of course, Han cannot use the Force.

"My friends," I said, turning my attention to those who pledged themselves to help me. "You have given me victory, and so I now give you freedom."

I felt power go out from me, a great dark rushing.

"I wish to stay," said the Gungan boss.

"Waargh," the wookie chieftain agrees.

"Wisdom you have achieved, Lord Vader," Yoda says, looking at me with respect.

I shrug. It felt odd to hear his praise.

"Learn from you and Padmé, perhaps all of us can," Yoda said. "If a new Jedi temple we found, serve as masters will the two of you?"

This sentence is more convoluted than Yoda's usual. I think he's asking if Padmé and I want to found a Jedi temple, to serve as its head masters. I am--well--more than a little surprised.

"It is the teaching of the Sith that I follow," I said.

The Emperor made a horrible sputtering disturbance in the force. All of us turned our attention toward him.

"Using love to obtain power? Setting people free when you've achieved your purpose? You call that Sith teaching?"

"It is, from a certain point of view," I said. And it is. Passion is power. Power is supposed to make us free.

"We agree," Padmé said, her spirit overshadowing mine. "That love is a dangerous emotion." A tingling euphoria passed through my being at the nearness of her. It was a rare experience for me at the time. I now believe it to be joy.

I laughed because I was happy, and because the suggestion of me training anyone feels so utterly ridiculous.

"What should we do?" I said in jest. "Found a temple where Jedi and Sith train together?"

"Balance to the force, it would bring," Yoda says, his face serious. "Yes, and the prophecy you would fulfill."

#

Our new temple was built in Cloud City on Bespin. I wanted it to be in the belly of the dead Sarlacc. I liked the atmosphere of the place, but Leia and Padmé rejected the idea.

We have a maze set up on the planet's surface, trenches where womp rats run as the students zoom in on X-Wing's and try to hit them with proton torpedo's. The exercise was Luke's idea of course, but I approve. I enjoy it when one of those rodents goes pop.

Frequently, couples come to study at the temple. Some come to us to be married, others wed at the conclusion of their training. When the latter is the case, Padmé and I attend the ceremonies and extend our energies in benediction. It is something I never imagined I would do, but it fulfills me in a way nothing else ever has.

Luke was right about me after all.

About Steven R. Brandt

Steven R. Brandt is an adjunct professor of Computer Science at Louisiana State University, known for his work on black holes. Steven is also the co-author of a fantasy novel entitled "Sword and Illusion" (which is available through Audible) and the creator of the game "Unruly Chess" available from TheGameCrafter.com.

Steven is the father of two children, and a husband for more than 25 years.

Links:

His website: <http://stevenrbrandt.com>

His blog: <http://stevenrbrandt.com/wordpress>

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Steven's impersonation of Darth Vader singing Kermit's "The Rainbow Connection":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NX9cLhiR7c>

A reference to Steven R. Brandt on Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numerical_relativity#cite_note-20

Steven R. Brandt's card game: <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/unruly-chess>

An online dictionary of literary fantasy worlds: <http://worldsof.org>

More Links about Steven R. Brandt: http://stevenrbrandt.com/wordpress/?page_id=834

Look for his book "Sword and Illusion" on Audible (the reader does a great job), Amazon, and Barnes and Noble.